

Social Entrepreneurship and Social Security: Synergies for Sustainable Social Policy

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ABSTRACT

The subject of this pioneering study is the link between the Social Economy and Social Security. Social Entrepreneurship, which is part of the Social Economy, can be a tool for ensuring and further supporting social security, as it is a promising option for solving various problems of modern society (unemployment, inclusion of vulnerable groups of the population, social adaptation, personal self-actualization, self-sufficiency, etc.). In other words, through the presentation of Greek and international literature on Social Security and Social Entrepreneurship, the importance of the latter for the support of Social Security on the one hand, and the development of public policies that will have a positive impact on the well-being of society as a whole on the other hand, is emphasized.

I. Introduction

The financial crisis of 2008, apart from the excessive derailment of the fiscal debt, had disastrous effects in all areas: the economy, employment, society and social exclusion (Lamprinidis, 2024 & 2023; Geormas, 2013). However, this crisis, in turn, is a good opportunity to highlight the role played by Social Economy Bodies¹ (SBOs) in addressing the above problems and supporting Social Security.²

The prosperity of a modern state is achieved by ensuring the sustainability of the country's socio-economic development. In turn, the sustainable socio-economic development of the country

¹ See for example: European Commission (2013) Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship, A Guide to Social Europe, Issue 4, <https://www.euricse.eu/projects/social-europe-guide-social-economy-and-social-entrepreneurship/>

² See Romanova S.A., Terziev V., Adreeva O., Sukhoveeva A, Galina P. & The Role of Social Entrepreneurship in Ensuring the Social Security of the State, International Journal of Economics and Business Administration, Volume VIII, Issue 4, pp 819-827.

presupposes the preservation of economic security, which is manifested, inter alia, by stimulating entrepreneurship in general, and Social Entrepreneurship in particular (Romanova et al, 2020). Social Entrepreneurship is a direction of social development that is relatively new and, therefore, of scientific interest. The scientific and cognitive problem lies in the fact that Social Entrepreneurship is a combination of two different, even in some respects opposite, concepts, as entrepreneurs focus on profit, while the social component is associated with the satisfaction of social needs.³

However, the modern concept of social development identifies the objectives of entrepreneurs' activities not exclusively as corporate, but as socially responsible for the whole society. Social entrepreneurship is one of the key conditions for the socio-economic development of the country and the achievement of its social security (Romanova et al., 2020).⁴The development of the social structure and relations in society, the system of life support and socialization of people, the way of life according to the needs of progress, current and future generations determine the content of Social Security - which is, moreover, an essential element of national security and economic prosperity of the country (Romanova et al, 2020). The level and quality of life of citizens are the most important indicators for assessing the real socio-economic consequences of reforms and

Social Security, in turn, is one of the key objectives of any state/public policy and a major part of the national strategy of the state. It could be provided with the help of Social Entrepreneurship⁵ as a promising option for solving various problems of modern society (unemployment⁶, inclusion of vulnerable groups of the population⁷, social adaptation, personal self-realization, self-sufficiency, in providing food, shelter, care and education to those in need, in protecting the

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⁴ In the same text

⁵See for example on social entrepreneurship: Amitsis, G. and Marini, F. (2015). 476 - 489, in A. Passas, K. Arvanitopoulos and M. Koppa (eds.), Greece - European Union: a relationship "through forty waves" 1981-2021, Topos, Athens, Athens, Greece.

⁶ Among the activities of Social Enterprises is the training of workers, who until recently remained excluded from the labour market, so that they acquire the necessary skills with a positive social impact both for themselves and for local entrepreneurship (Giormas, 2013).

⁷ For example, in Greece, with the Law no. 2716/1999 entitled "Development and Modernization of Mental Health Services and other provisions", for example concerning the establishment of Social Cooperatives of Limited Responsibility (KOISPE), among other things, along with the outpatient and out-of-hospital care of people with psychological problems, their social and professional reintegration is sought. As COISPEs are both economic and therapeutic units (Cassavetes, 2013)

natural environment, in providing assistance at the international level, in cases of natural disasters, epidemics and wars, in providing assistance in the field of social protection, in the field of social security, in the field of social protection, in the field of social security, in the field of social protection, in the field of social security, in the field of social protection, in the field of social security, in the field of social protection, in the field of social security.etc.) (Ramonova et al, 2020; Andrikopoulos, 2019). In this regard, of great importance is the creation of the necessary conditions for the expansion of Social Entrepreneurship business activity through the implementation of a scientifically based and well-articulated state incentive policy (Lamprinidis, 2024; Lamprinidis, 2023; Romanova et al, 2020). And for this purpose, it is necessary to clearly define the economic boundaries of Social Entrepreneurship, which in turn will create the appropriate legal framework for its operation and formulate criteria for reporting to it for the possibility of participating in competitive and subsidized programs to obtain additional funding (Romanova et al, 2020).

In this paper we will examine the link between Social Entrepreneurship and Social Security in the context of the socio-economic development of the country. In Greece, with the laws 4019/2011 and 4430/2016, we already have the creation of a new legal form of enterprises, the Social Cooperative Enterprises (KOINSEP) that can be part of the Welfare State and the National Social Inclusion Strategy.^{8,9}

II. Social Entrepreneurship as a means of supporting Social Security

As is well known, the concept of Social Security includes any of the measures established by law to maintain individual or family income or to provide income when some or all sources of income are interrupted or discontinued or when exceptionally high costs have to be incurred (e.g. to raise children or pay for health care) (Abel-Smith, 2024). Thus, Social Security can provide cash benefits to people facing illness and disability, unemployment, crop failure, loss of a spouse, maternity, responsibility for the care of young children, or retirement from work (Abel-Smith, 2024; ILO, nd). Social security benefits can be provided in cash or in kind for medical needs, rehabilitation, domestic help during illness at home, legal assistance or funeral expenses.

⁸ See for example: Amitsis, G. (2016):Emblematic initiatives to safeguard social cohesion in the era of the Memoranda - The model of the National Social Inclusion Strategy, "The Reform of the Social State" Series No. 1, Papazisis, Athens and Amitsis, G. (2014):The collective stakes of active inclusion of vulnerable groups - Developmental lessons from Social Europe, Papazisis, Athens

⁹ See for example on social protection and active employment policies Stergiou, A. (2003) The Protection of Fundamental Social Rights within the European Union, in Amitsis G./Bergman J./Hemerijck A./Sakellaropoulos T./Stergiou A. (eds) Connecting Welfare Diversity within the European Social Model, Report, p. 225-257, Athens: Ministry of Labour and Social Security and Stergiou, A. (2000). Facts, Analyses, Prospects and Prospects, Perspectives and Prospects, Research and Policy, Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer Edition, 87-110, Berlin/Heidelberg.

Social security can be provided by court order (e.g. to compensate accident victims), by employers (sometimes using insurance companies), by central or local government agencies, or by semi-governmental or autonomous organizations.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) uses three criteria to define a Social Security system¹⁰. First, the objective of the system must be to provide curative or preventive medical care, to maintain income in the event of involuntary loss of earnings or a substantial part of earnings, or to provide supplementary income to persons with family responsibilities. Secondly, the scheme must be established by legislation conferring specific individual rights or imposing specific obligations on a public, semi-public or autonomous body. And thirdly, the scheme must be administered by a public, semi-public or autonomous body.

An alternative but broader term for Social Security in countries that are members of the European Union is Social Protection, which includes voluntary schemes that are not set up under legislation¹¹. The term social services is used to cover social security, health, education and housing services, as well as provisions for social work and social welfare. In the United States, the term Social Security is limited to the federal Social Security system (OASDI), as opposed to government benefits and "welfare", which in Europe would be called social assistance¹². In some countries (e.g. Denmark and the UK) poverty reduction has historically been a central objective of social security policy and the concept of income maintenance was added at a later stage.¹³

A report published in 1984¹⁴, prepared by 10 international experts appointed by the Director of the ILO, set out the ultimate objectives of Social Security:

"Its fundamental purpose is to give individuals and families confidence that their standard of living and quality of life will not be significantly compromised, as far as possible, by any social or economic contingency. This includes not only meeting needs as they arise, but also preventing risks and helping individuals and families to best adapt when they face disabilities and disadvantages that are not or could not be prevented. . . . it is the guarantee of safety that

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¹⁴ See for example: <https://www.ilo.org/media/334561/download>

matters most of all, rather than the specific mechanisms, such as contributory or tax funding, the insurance or service delivery model, or the ownership of the facilities (public/private, for-profit/non-profit) by which that guarantee is given. means should not be confused with ends."

From what has already been mentioned, it is easy to understand that social security includes all those policy measures related to poverty reduction, income support, social protection, provision of social services (health, education, housing, etc.). The Social Economy in turn and Social Entrepreneurship in particular is, as we will see below, actively involved in the provision of social services and income support for people at risk of social exclusion and poverty.

Social Entrepreneurship in economics, according to the international literature, is a promising area of entrepreneurship, which contains several problems both from the point of view of theoretical research and from the point of view of practical research (Lambrinidis, 2024; Ramonova et al, 2020). The very concept of Social Entrepreneurship, in its modern form, is quite new (Ramonova et al, 2020). At the same time, there are still several disagreements regarding the terminology of social entrepreneurship (Lambrinidis, 2024; Ramonova et al, 2020; Doulia, 2015): criteria and definitions, a practical research basis. In the context of social insurance, the problem of social entrepreneurship has not been particularly studied, while it has significant potential in the light of the need to improve the quality of life of citizens (which is particularly complicated by the negative consequences of the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus infection), which, of course, is a key component of social insurance (Lambrinidis, 2024; Ramonova et al, 2020).

The United Nations already uses a methodology that includes eight categories in the concept of human security¹⁵ , among which social security stands out (Ramonova et al, 2020). Freedom from want and poverty, as a component of social security, according to this approach, could be achieved through the Social Entrepreneurship sector, which often involves the most vulnerable citizens¹⁶ . At this point it seems appropriate to briefly refer to the concepts of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise.

According to Makarevich and Sazonova (2012) social entrepreneurship is a new way of economic activity that has the following characteristics:

1. ***the social purpose of the organisation***, i.e. the social outcome is a planned and expected result and not a side effect, as in ordinary commercial entrepreneurship. Such enterprises are initially created to achieve socially important goals, manifested

¹⁵ See more, <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/what-is-human-security/>

¹⁶ In the same text

in the creation of jobs (including for people with disabilities), training (including adults), etc,

2. **business innovation**, which could be realised by using a new idea or a new combination of resources (including those that are not very attractive from a market perspective) to solve a societal problem,
3. **achieving sustainable self-sufficiency** by generating income from the sale of the results of activities (goods and services), as well as through grants and charitable donations.

In other words, the Social Enterprise is a new, innovative and alternative institution that comes to address the weaknesses of the labour market and social policy. It is an entity that attempts to combine social service provision through legal forms and private sector management models but with organisational forms and statutes that promote the social purpose of the initiative (Klimi-Kaminari & Papageorgiou, 2010). Through social enterprises, according to Stryjan (2006 and 2004), both the employment and training of disadvantaged workers and their integration into society are sought. According to the Anglo-Saxon origin, Social Enterprise is a commercial activity, which has social purposes, the surpluses of which are reinvested in the Enterprise or in the community and includes both inputs (such as for example the employment of the unemployed) and outputs (production of goods and services) (Doulia, 2015).

In Greece, we distinguish two major groups of Social Enterprises (Doulia, 2015):

1. Social Enterprises whose primary objective is the labour integration of disadvantaged groups of the population. In these enterprises a mixture of regular workers and workers belonging to vulnerable and disadvantaged social groups is used. These are the Social Enterprises for Labour Integration, which includes Social Cooperative Enterprises for Integration (KOINSEP for Integration) and Social Cooperatives of Limited Responsibility (KOISPE) (Apostolopoulos et al., 2020). These are autonomous economic entities with the main objective of professional integration of people who face serious difficulties in their efforts to join the labour market. The integration of these workers takes place through the offer of productive employment and individual monitoring of their progress.
2. Social Enterprises whose primary objective is the production and provision of social and collective services. These are, in other words, Social Enterprises with a mainly productive purpose. In Greece, this category includes Social Cooperative Enterprises

of Collective and Social Benefit that operate for sustainable development or provide services of general interest (Apostolopoulos et al, 2020). These Enterprises exhibit significant productive activity and are characterized by a certain level of innovation either in the process or in the products produced.

From the above it is easily understood that through the Social Economy Entities, on the one hand, the labour and social integration of vulnerable social groups is pursued and on the other hand, the provision of goods and services to social groups that have been excluded from the market economy, supporting in practice the concept of social security, which is the support of people to deal with risks due to ageing, economic hardship, etc..

This is confirmed by EU statistics on social entrepreneurship and on supporting the well-being and social security of its citizens. In 2019, in particular, there were already more than 2.8 million Social Enterprises operating in the EU, representing 10% of all enterprises (Apostolopoulos et al, 2020). More than 13.6 million people were employed in Social Enterprises, which corresponds to 6% of the EU workforce, and their membership exceeded 160 million people. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that Social Enterprises, because of their importance to the economy and society, are supported through various funding programmes such as COSME for SMEs. European funds such as the Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund financially support the development of Social Enterprises in the EU (Apostolopoulos et al, 2020).

III. Conclusions

The strengthening of Social Security will ensure the implementation of the strategic objectives of the state's social policy: the development of the economic and social capacity of the state, the implementation of the guarantees of citizens' rights in the field of work, education, culture, health, the improvement of the quality of life, the social welfare index and the social mood of citizens. Indeed, the emergence of new risks, such as in dealing with the effects of the consequences of coronavirus, requires the search for innovative ways of minimising them. A prerequisite for strengthening the country's social security system is for the State to take appropriate measures that will help both to safeguard and further enhance the well-being of vulnerable social groups and , on the other hand , to support individual citizens and entrepreneurs who seek to solve social problems and thus raise quality and living standards.

Social Economy Bodies in general and Social Enterprises in particular can make a positive contribution to the strengthening of Social Security for all citizens of the country, as the focus of these enterprises is on the one hand the employment and social integration of citizens who face the risk of marginalization and social exclusion and on the other hand providing goods and services to both vulnerable social groups and the wider society, operating in an innovative way,

respecting the environment and the environmentally sensitive people.

Finally, it is worth noting that the European Commission (2021) both with its Action Plan for the Social Economy¹⁷ and with the "*Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Making Public Procurement effective in and for Europe*" the importance of Social Economy Actors in addressing the economic and social problems faced by citizens in the European Union.

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¹⁷ See European Commission (2021). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Building an economy that works for people: an action plan for the social economy, SWD(2021) 373 Final. Retrieved from: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=24986&langId=en>

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